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NORTHCOM AND SOUTHCOM FOR POLAD

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SUBJECT: SURGE IN INTERDICTIONS OF HAITIAN MIGRANTS

1. SUMMARY: The U.S. Coast Guard has intercepted over 300 illegal Haitian migrants in five separate interdictions since November 5, a higher rate than usual. Deputy Prime Minister Pratt and other Bahamian officials have expressed directly to the DCM their concerns at the increased number of migrants. The Bahamian Defense Force has moved one of its ships into the Windward Passage just north of Haiti and will work with the U.S. Coast Guard to maintain a visible deterrent presence off the coast. END SUMMARY.

More than 300 Haitians Interdicted

2. The U.S. Coast Guard has interdicted 306 Haitians in five separate incidents in the four days since November 5. The majority of the vessels were stopped south of Great Inagua at the southern end of the Bahamian archipelago, one or two days into their journey.

Bahamian Officials Worried

3. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for National Security Cynthia Pratt expressed her concern at the recent increase in interdictions to the DCM at an event on November 7. Labor and Immigration Minister Vincent Peet and MFA Permanent Secretary Patricia Rodgers also phoned to express similar

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sentiments.

4. The Bahamian Defense Force has moved one of its ships closer to the coast of Haiti. The Defense Force will work closely with the increased number of U.S. Coast Guard assets in the area to maintain a highly visible presence in an effort to discourage potential migrants.

5. COMMENT: The recent run of good weather in the region is one possible explanation for the increased number of interdictions. There is also, however, uncertainty regarding U.S. intentions on Temporary Protected Status. Many of the thousands of illegal Haitians in The Bahamas, well-connected to the communities in Florida and Haiti, might rightly or wrongly view the possibility of "status" in the United States as a sufficient incentive to launch a journey toward the U.S.

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